

## 1. What is identity theft? What are the impacts?

- Identity theft refers to any crime in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's identity to commit frauds or other criminal activities.
- Once stolen, a victim's identity is used to create bank loans, cell phone contracts, mortgage applications, major purchases, etc.
- Identity theft can involve:
  - Theft of credit cards and other government documents;
  - Skimming;
  - Dumpster diving;
  - Shoulder surfing
  - Email and website spoofing; and
  - Mail theft
- In 2009, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Center(CAFC) received over 11,000 reports of identity theft, totalling a loss of more than 10 million dollars.
- Most victims are unaware that their personal information has been stolen. It can take months or years to be rid of an identity thief. Identity theft can result in:
  - Destroyed credit status- resulting in loan and credit card refusal.
  - Criminal record- Victims discover that they have criminal records as the identity thief used the victim's identity when arrested.
  - Denial of employment or promotion- For position requiring a background check. If a criminal has committed a crime with your identity, you may not get the job/promotion.
  - Psychological scars- Victims may become hyper vigilant, feel angry, vulnerable, helpless or violated.

## 2. How can someone reduce the risk of identity theft on a daily basis?

- *Be credit card safe*- Never carry more credit cards than necessary and cancel all credit cards that you no longer use.
- *Protect your PIN*- When entering your PIN scan your surroundings. Be sure that no one can see it.
- *Safeguard personal information*- Never carry your SIN card or birth certificate. Provide personal information only when you have initiated the contact or you know who you are dealing with. Be cautious and smart about personal information that you publish on any social networking site.
- *Change passwords frequently*- You may be compromised and not know – minimize your risk.

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- *Review your records regularly*- Check your bank and credit card statements when they arrive and report any discrepancies.
- *Protect your passwords*- Use different passwords for your credit card, bank and telephone accounts.
- *Secure your mail*- Shred all credit card receipts, utility bills or documents that contain personal details. When you change your address, ensure that you contact Canada Post and all relevant financial institutions.
- *Ensure your computer and Internet safety*- Install a firewall to prevent outsiders from accessing your data.
- Be vigilant.

### **3. If someone is a victim of identity theft what should they do?**

- Signs you could be a victim:
  - You receive credit card bills for cards you did not apply for;
  - You no longer receive credit card statements or notice that not all your mail is getting delivered; or
  - A collection agency contacts you about purchases or accounts that you never opened.
- Contact all credit grantors and banks and have your accounts red flagged.
- File a report with your local police department.
- Advise a credit reporting agency - see next page for credit agency information.

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## Credit Agency Information

### Equifax

Large and small businesses rely on Equifax for consumer and business credit intelligence, portfolio management, fraud detection, decisioning technology and marketing tools. They help individuals manage their personal credit information, protect their identity and maximize their financial well-being. Equifax was founded in 1899 and maintains information on over 400 million credit holders world wide. Equifax is based in Atlanta, Georgia with over 7,000 employees in 14 countries.

- **Contact:**

*Online:* [www.equifax.ca](http://www.equifax.ca)

*By phone:* 1-800-465-7166

### Transunion

With national headquarters in Toronto, Ontario, Transunion was formed in 1989. They operate in over 25 countries across five continents. Transunion delivers educational information and tools to help consumers gain a clear understanding of their credit history, the impact of their financial behaviour and helps guard against identity theft and financial fraud.

- **Contact:**

*Online:* [www.transunion.ca](http://www.transunion.ca)

*By phone:* 1-877-525-3823 (Between hours of 8:00 am and 8:00 pm ET)

*By mail:*

Transunion

Attention: Fraud Victim Assistance Department

P.O Box 338, LCD1

Hamilton, ON L8L 7W2

**Your best weapon is your brain. Use common sense, imagination, and good judgment.**